

STATEMENT OF
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COMMANDING GENERAL, TRAINING AND EDUCATION COMMAND
U.S. MARINE CORPS
BEFORE THE
HOUSE ARMED SERVICES COMMITTEE
CONCERNING
MILITARY TRANSITION TEAM TRAINING
ON
December 7, 2006

Introduction

Critical elements of the Global War on Terror are Transition Teams (TT), serving in advisor and training missions in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom (OIF) and Operation Enduring Freedom (OEF). In all, the Marine Corps has nearly 28,000 Marines deployed in support of OIF/OEF. Over 700 of these deployed Marines are part of the security transition teams in Iraq and Afghanistan that are working to increase the proficiency, combat effectiveness, and internal security capacity of these countries. The current TT training mission for the Marine Corps will prepare over 80 teams during the current FY for tasks as military, border security and national police Transition Teams.

Pre-deployment Training Program

All Marine Corps forces deploying overseas for combat operations train in accordance with the guidance contained in the Marine Corps Pre-deployment Training Program (PTP). Formalized in April of this year, PTP institutionalized the building block approach that OIF/OEF deploying Marine Forces go through prior to deployment. The same building block approach designed for major combat, combat support, and combat service support units is also applied to the training of our Transition Teams.

When Transition Team missions were first identified in 2003, they were sourced from a variety of Marine units both active duty and reserve, and training was conducted in a variety of venues. As the numbers of Transition Teams increased, and they increasingly assumed roles as advisors and not just trainers, Transition Team training also evolved. As the demands and complexity of the Transition Team mission expanded, Transition Team training required additional skills to support their increasingly stand alone mission. The evolution of the Transition Team mission and increasing training requirements led the MEF Commanders to work with TECOM to assist in establishing a uniform, standards based training package for Transition Teams which is consistent with our unit PTP approach. TECOM established a Mission Essential Task List, an economical division of training labor to maximize Transition Team training while minimizing

time away from home station, and a venue in which to assess Transition Team capability prior to deployment.

The model for this Transition Team training was the time tested template in which Marine units learn shoot-move-communicate skills at home station, and then deploy for a 3 to 4 week course established at MAGTFTC (29 Palms) to immerse units in a language and culture environment in which they must demonstrate their mastery of unit skills. Infantry battalions go through this training, known as *Mojave Viper*, and a similar program designed specifically for Transition Teams is being established. Currently, TECOM plans to conduct this course at 29 Palms for OIF Transition Teams and will conduct a test course in January. It takes advantage of the Marine Corps' training resources and capacity that already exist at 29 Palms. Similarly, a course designed specifically for OEF Transition Teams will combine the advantages of training at 29 Palms and MWTC Bridgeport.

Transition Team Training

Transition Teams are currently made up primarily of field grade officers and staff non-commissioned officers. As relatively senior Marines, they require additional skill sets normally executed by more junior Marines in platoon and larger size units. Skills such as tactical vehicle driving and expedient communication equipment repair must be learned. Additionally, refresher training ranging from medevac procedures to artillery call-for-fire must take place. These skills are currently all taught at home station and identified in the Mission Essential Task List as essential skills for Transition Teams. They are taught during a 30-45 day training package by the MEFs. Our plan for the future includes all Transition Teams then deploying to 29 Palms for an intense 24 day course of immersion in both language and culture while executing scenario based training events to improve and hone their skills. Training will include High Risk of Capture (HRC) training, foreign weapons training, IED defeat, and live fire convoy operations. Most importantly, Teams will be trained in how to "Advise" their foreign counterparts to build their host units skills and confidence. They will face daily scenarios in problem solving unique to their advisor missions, whether they be a military, border, or national police Transition Team. Finally

each Team will go through a final assessment of their skills, with the result briefed to their MEF Commander.

The planned curriculum is based on the training requirements directed in the Request for Forces (RFF), experience of units and teams in Iraq and Afghanistan, and will be refined through a formal process of Lessons Learned to insure currency and relevancy of training to keep pace with the changing mission and environment on the battlefield.

Joint Training Opportunities

During this process TECOM has coordinated with the U.S. Army at Fort Riley, Kansas to find common ground for training opportunities and share best practices. Due to differences in Team sourcing, mission evolution, and service culture, the current Fort Riley program does not fit Marine requirements at present for Transition Team training. However we are exploring the possibilities of sharing training venues for Transition Teams destined for Afghanistan. Lessons learned for Afghan Embedded Training Teams (ETTs) continually stress the importance of training in the mountain environment, and sharing of training sites may show benefits for all.

Conclusion

The Marine Corps continues to adapt to the changing requirements of Transition Team training to insure we provide our Marines the most relevant and demanding training available, not only to enable them to accomplish their mission, but to ensure their survival on the battlefield.